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Inside Information

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RADIO INTERN IS WOMAN ON THE RUN

Biff! Bam!

Welcome to Washington, little lady!

Kathleen Lonergan, this summer's intern in the radio shop of USDA's Office of Information, is a woman on the run. And she works hard for her money. So she didn't want to give up her purse to a would-be mugger at the bus stop the other morning.

When the young man ran into her and tried to snatch her purse, Lonergan, 22 years old and 5-foot-eight, swung with her fist. Smacked in the face, the boy was stunned, stepped back, and then ran.

When she heard about it on the radio back home--one of Lonergan's coworkers had passed it along--Lonergan's sister phoned and said "That's showing 'em what Iowa girls are made of."

Scheduled to graduate from Iowa State University in December, Lonergan is defining the Iowa girl every day as a bundle of talented, enthusiastic energy.

Embarrassed because she still hasn't visited her own State capital, Lonergan started work in Washington six days after returning from a university travel course that took her to such cities as London, Paris, Rome, Prague, and Moscow for 5-1/2 weeks. She paid for that trip from her earnings as assistant farm director for public radio station WOI back in Ames.

Like the rest of her 7-children family, Lonergan has paid for all of her college education, with two or three jobs at a time during the school year and 60-hour work weeks during the summers. Most of that time in recent years has been with radio stations in Iowa...broadcasting news about her favorite subject: agriculture.

It wasn't surprising that she was broadcasting nationwide on her first day on the job at USDA...the Department's fruit and vegetable crop report.

Her biggest thrill to date (no reflection on the assaultive efforts of the would-be-purse snatcher) was her coverage the other day of an important ag news conference on Capitol Hill about the economywide impact of the farm crisis. What might sound like complicated commodity and credit jargon to big city folks, "is just the way we talk back home," Lonergan explains.

Understandably, she's has five job offers for the day she leaves the university.

FS ASKS: WHAT ARE PA SKILLS

What are the skills expected of a public affairs specialist?

How well equipped are each of us in those skills?

Those questions are addressed directly in a 7-page booklet (really a checklist) prepared recently by a special task force on professionalism created by the public affairs/information people at the Forest Service.

A companion booklet prepared by the task force addresses an equally interesting question: Am I, as a program manager, adequately employing the skills of my public affairs staff?

Single copies are available. Write: Tom Harlan, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2417, Washington, D.C. 20250. His FTS phone number is 447-5006.

In "Professional Development Guide for the Public Affairs Officer," the reader is asked to assess him-or-herself in such skills as:

Hiring and managing a professional staff.

Managing the use of computers, word processors, and other state of the art communications technology to effectively manage the public affairs program.

Integrating public affairs perspective into agency decisionmaking and advising management on likely public affairs impacts.

Developing plans and schedules for production and placement of news and feature copy for all forms of media to ensure wide coverage.

In "Public Affairs Skills for the Developing Manager," Forest Service managers are asked to assess themselves in such areas as:

Understanding the effects of public opinion and how it limits decision space.

Ability to identify, understand, and effectively manage emerging issues.

Recognize the value of monitoring public opinion, briefing elected officials, conducting on-site visits, attending meetings between Forest Service and other agencies.

The introduction of "Professional Development" says:

"Over the years, PAO career development has been unstructured. Beginning professionals (GS-5 and 7 levels) complete a 1-year training plan, but this gives only a basic orientation to the agency. The rest must be learned through on-the-job training. It takes years to groom an effective PAO, especially since there have been no objective guides to the skills and knowledge a PAO should possess.

"What will emerge from use of the checklist is a clear picture of individual strengths and weaknesses.

"Then working with his/her supervisor, the PAO can set up a orderly, long term career development program. This program can be sharply focused--aimed only at the greatest needs. This will allow better use of scarce time and training money."

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DO STUDENTS SEEK GOVERNMENT JOBS?

Granted it's a small poll, but last fall, Larry Quinn, chief of the Video and Film Division of USDA's Office of Information, asked students in a sophomore journalism class at the University of Maryland how many would consider seeking a job with the government.

Out of 30 in the class, three responded affirmatively.

The question begs to be asked in other classes at other universities.

If anybody out there tries it, send the results to INSIDE INFORMATION.

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FSIS, ES ADD TAPE TO RESIDUE CAMPAIGN

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service and Extension Service have added a 14-minute videotape to their information arsenal on residue avoidance.

The tape "Avoiding Residues," may be ordered in two home formats: Beta and VCR, and in 3/4-inch. It will be distributed, as much of the previous information material in the 3-year-old campaign, by the Cooperative Extension Service, industry groups and the educational system.

Addressed to livestock producers, the tape seeks to convince farmers it makes good economic sense to take specific precautions to avoid having drug residues in meat and poultry.

Steve Fenwick, visual information specialist in FSIS, created the tape. It was scheduled to be shown at the Aug. 6 meeting of USDA's Public Affairs Council (PAC).

Hedy Ohringer, public affairs specialist, is FSIS key person in this cooperative campaign, which has involved FSIS contributing \$3 million for 49 projects in 34 States.

Both Fenwick and Ohringer are members of Karen Stuck's Information team in FSIS.

Ohringer notes that FSIS is about to reproduce and distribute about 20 farmer-education materials, including fact sheets, brochures, envelope stuffers, posters, and slide shows produced both by FSIS and State Extension offices.

Persons interested in obtaining the tape and/or other materials should contact the FSIS Information Office, Room 1160-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. On Dialcom, their electronic mail address is AGR059.

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VIDEOCONFERENCING TALK SET FOR AUG. 16

The successful 1984 videoconference "Revitalizing Downtown," cosponsored by USDA's Office of Rural Development Policy, will be discussed Aug. 16 in an open meeting of USDA's teleconference center advisory group.

Jeff Soule, policy analyst with ORDP, will show a portion of the videoconference and field questions.

The meeting is set for 10 a.m. in conference room 1605-S in USDA's South Building. Nonmembers of the committee may attend by contacting Betty Fleming, teleconference coordinator, in advance on (202) 447-5368.

Meanwhile, Fleming has mailed the first copy of a bimonthly newsletter on teleconferencing to the advisory group. Others may receive the newsletter by calling Fleming.

Also, Fleming is working with the Extension Service in compiling a list of Cooperative Extension Service field teleconference contacts.

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UNDERSTANDING WASHINGTON MEDIA

Congressional Quarterly's conference: "Understanding Public Relations and the Washington News Media," has a subtitle "Getting Your Message Across to Congress," but the program seems to cover the basics in depth and implies a much broader audience. It'll be Sept. 27 at the Hyatt Regency Washington Hotel on Capitol Hill and costs \$295. Contact: the CQ conference coordinator at (202) 887-8620, or through Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1414 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

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DIALCOM TO CONTRACT WITH MMDS

We are informed that ITT Dialcom Inc. will contract with Martin Marietta Data Systems (MMDS) to pull USDA news releases and other current information from USDA's newest system for electronic dissemination of information (EDI).

That means that current information on "USDA Online" will continue. In fact, more information than is currently available may be offered. That will depend, of course, on user demand for specific information available from the EDI system.

Other computerized agricultural information services with MMDS contracts for distribution of USDA releases and information through their networks include: Agnet, of Lincoln, Neb.; AgriData Network, of Milwaukee, Wisc.; and Commodity News Service, of Kansas City, Mo. Reuters News also still plans to access USDA news and reports from EDI.

Other electronic news services have expressed interest but have not submitted contracts, perhaps due to delays in getting EDI up and running.

Due to some initial technical problems, MMDS did not get the full EDI service on-line by July 1, as announced. But it did have the system in operation by the last week in July.

SOME OTHER NOTES FROM THE WORLD OF EDI

FROM DOWN UNDER...Australia's Overseas Telecommunications Commission has been approved to access USDA information and make it available to that country's agricultural constituents via a government-run Dialcom system.

Likewise, New Zealand's Post Office is considering accessing USDA information to make it available electronically through an NZPO-run Dialcom system. This at the request of an agricultural group in that country.

AND SPEAKING OF NZPO...Would you believe that when one New Zealander wants to contact another New Zealander by electronic mail, his or her message must travel thousands of miles just to get there...through Silver Spring, Maryland, as a matter of fact. That's because the NZPO computer is located in Silver Spring. It all takes just a few seconds, of course. Still, plans are underway to begin using an Australian computer to cut costs.

FROM THE MIDWEST...AgriData Resources Inc. (operator of AgriData Network) and Satellite Broadcast Network, of Chicago, have announced a subscription business data service for personal computer and home satellite dish owners. SBN provides high-speed computer data to personal computer via satellite, eliminating some of the problems inherent in land lines.

FROM THE EAST COAST...After a year's experience in the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia area, Grassroots America, the first U.S.-based agricultural videotex service, has announced it is expanding into the Midwest.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either John Crowley or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGR009 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

